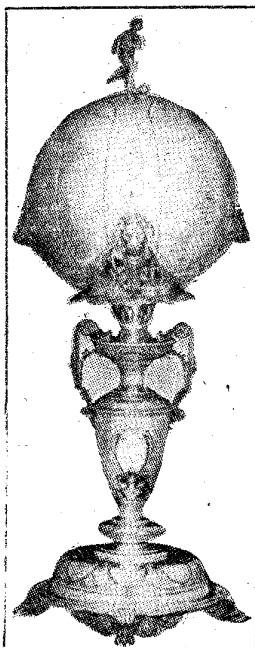


WANDERERS LEAVE IT SO LATE!



Friendly is off

WYCOMBE Wanderers proposed friendly against St Albans City from Division 2 of the Isthmian League tonight (Tuesday), has been postponed because of the weather.

On Saturday the Blues travel to Slough Town for the third and deciding meeting between these local rivals. The Rebels won 3-1 at Loakes Park in the Isthmian League but Wanderers took their revenge with a 3-0 return win at Wexham Park a fortnight ago. This third meeting is in the third round of the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup.

Tomorrow, Wycombe Wanderers youth are away to St. Albans Youth in the Berger Paints Isthmian Cup. Wycombe must win if they are to clinch the third place in section A which will put them into the finals.

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION (up to and inc. 16/1/78)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	26	21	4	1	62	16	87
Wycombe	26	17	2	7	46	26	63
Leatherhead	26	14	7	5	46	23	49
Hitchin	26	13	7	6	43	30	46
Carshalton	27	12	7	8	46	38	43
Tooting	27	12	7	8	38	33	43
Croydon	28	12	6	10	34	42	42
Hayes	28	12	6	10	36	37	42
Dagenham	26	12	5	9	47	39	41
Sutton	24	11	5	8	32	34	38
Staines	24	10	7	7	30	33	37
Hendon	27	10	6	11	36	37	36
Barking	27	10	4	13	43	45	34
Walthamstow	22	8	7	7	34	34	31
Boreham Wd	26	8	6	12	35	49	30
Slough	26	8	5	13	34	45	29
Kingstonian	27	6	7	14	29	39	25
Woking	22	6	3	13	34	41	21
Southall	26	4	9	13	28	48	21
Leytonstone	28	3	11	14	29	48	20
Tilbury	22	4	7	11	31	41	19
Stortford	27	3	6	18	28	60	16

BERGER YOUTH CUP (up to 5/1/78)

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Southall	11	7	3	1	28	14	24
Slough	12	7	2	3	28	13	23
St Albans City	11	5	3	3	21	17	18
Hendon	11	5	1	5	30	19	16
Wycombe	11	5	1	5	28	23	16
Maidenhead	10	3	5	2	20	23	14
Wembley	12	2	3	7	14	35	9
Wokingham	12	0	4	8	13	36	4

Marlow off

MARLOW'S come in the

A GOAL in the 89th minute from Mick Holfield finally put an end to Bridgend's brave challenge and secured Wycombe Wanderers a place in the second round of the F. A. Trophy on Saturday.

This is only the second time in five seasons that Wanderers have cleared the first round hurdle and after this latest showing they will have to take a far greater percentage of scoring chances if they are to progress much further. Faced by only a mediocre side, Wycombe made heavy weather of this victory for one reason — they failed to turn their obvious superiority into goals.

As early as the first 15 seconds the Blues might have found the net and from that moment on they established themselves as the better side. So they should have been, after all, they play in a superior league.

But the longer the game went on the more anxious Wanderers and their 600 or so supporters became. And if Gary Jones's 88th minute volley had gone in instead of striking the crossbar, Wycombe's interest in the competition might have disappeared. As it was, the Blues scored a minute later to bring the pulse rate of their fervent fans back to normal level.

For Bridgend, this was their biggest game of the season. Their average gate in a passionate rugby area is normally below three figures, so Saturday's 1,000 was a real bonus. The town had probably never seen anything like it: 400 supporters, players and officials wending their way from the railway station to the ground in one long trail.

Bridgend Town 0, Wycombe Wanderers 1 REPORT BY STUART EARP

At first, Bridgend's pitch looked in fair condition but once play had got under way the previous week's flooding and cold weather took its toll. It soon became a muddy mess which, as manager John Reardon feared, suited the home side perfectly and blunted Wycombe's fast and free flowing football.

Despite that, Wanderers wasted no time in carving out the chances. From the kick-off Keith Mead's long punt upfield was backheaded by Clive Charles to his goalkeeper. The ball fell short, Derek Harris nipped in and Graham Mackenzie had a clear chance but saw his effort fly wide.

Four minutes later Bridgend were in more trouble as the impressive Paul Birdseye crossed low and hard. Dave Annetts, a big goalkeeper, failed to hold the ball but Charles cleared off the line. From then on Annetts enjoyed a fine game. He needed to as well, for Wycombe had 80 per cent of the first half and kept the home side pinned inside their own territory.

TIGHT MARKING

Annetts needed two attempts to hold Howard Kennedy's powerful eighth minute free kick and then seconds later Holfield forced his way through the defence but the goalkeeper held onto Harris's flick. This was one

of the few occasions Holfield escaped the tight marking of Charles, who looked a class above his team-mates, despite playing with a pulled hamstring.

Bridgend's first hope of a goal came in the 22nd minute when Andy Beattie bundled Kennedy off the ball inside the box but the fiery Jim McInch drove over the top. The action soon returned to the other end with Harris heading over Graham Mackenzie's cross and then Mackenzie himself and Holfield testing Annetts.

The early dominance and spring in Wycombe's heels was slowly ebbing away, however, as the home side began to come into the game. Then, with four minutes to go until half-time, Wanderers seemed to have taken the lead. A clearance from a corner came out to John Priestley, some 20 yards from goal. He cracked in an unstoppable shot that hit the underside of the crossbar, bounced down and was cleared. Witnesses said the ball was over the line, but referee Bevan waved aside appeals after looking at his linesman.

That incident gave people plenty to talk about during the break but the most worrying aspect of Wycombe's play was their inability to find the net. The early stages of the second half saw a continuation of the first with the Blues firmly in the driving seat.

But then Bridgend began to bring some physical tactics into the game in a bid to upset the visitors. It worked, too, for the home side had their best spell at this stage. Wanderers lost their rhythm, especially up front where Harris was having a difficult time. Eventually Dylan Evans replaced Tony Horseman.

Three quick corners restored Wycombe's pressure and in the 72nd minute Bob Davies's cross from a short corner caught everyone by surprise. It flew across the face of goal to Mead, whose side-foot shot was blocked by the diving Annetts.

GREAT SAVE

Back came Bridgend and Peter Spittle, untroubled for the previous 80 minutes, pulled off a great save when he tipped Graham Bennett's close range header away for a corner following a fine cross from Charles. A minute later Beattie was booked for a foul on Kennedy.

With only two minutes left most people were looking forward to a resumption at Loakes Park on Tuesday. But those last two minutes proved decisive. First Bridgend won a corner which was cleared out to Jones on the edge of the box. He caught the ball superbly on the volley and the ball dipped onto the crossbar with Spittle helpless. At the other end Holfield streaked clear but was overhauled by two defenders. He found Evans but he drove over the top.

Then, with only a minute to go, Holfield struck the decider. Birdseye, carrying a painful shoulder injury, collected a throw-in and crossed into the box. Holfield controlled well, slipped past Paul Harris, side-stepped Annetts and rolled the ball home.

Wanderers had the ball in the net during injury time when Priestley's drive was deflected home by Paul Harris but the linesman ruled offside.

BRIDGEND: D. Annetts; C. Charles, C. Stapleton, P. Harris, W. Harris; R. Husking, J. McInch, A. Beattie; G. Jones, G. Bennett, D. John, Sub. B. Colwill (not used).

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies; G. Mackenzie, J. Priestley, H. Kennedy; A. Horseman (sub D. Evans 71 mins); D. Harris, M. Holfield.

Referee: M. Bevan.
Half-time: 0-0. **Goalscorer** — Holfield (89).
Attendance: 1,000.

High praise for Supporters' Club

WYCOMBE WANDERERS Supporters' Club which organised transport arrangements for both supporters and players on Saturday, was highly praised by both officials and club manager (writes Stuart Earp).

The Supporters' Club arranged through British Rail for a train to take the 400 strong party to Bridgend and back and they also handled the catering arrangements.

Wanderers' chairman Reg Williams paid tribute to their efforts, saying: "This was the first time the players and supporters had travelled together under arrangement of the supporters' club and the whole venture was a marvellous success. The Supporters Club deserves full marks."

Manager John Reardon also thanked the club on behalf of the players. On the return journey several of the players took time off to chat with supporters, and several fans asked me to convey their thanks for this gesture.